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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates factors associated with the self-esteem of school children in the fourth and seventh grades. The 460 students were drawn from 5 schools in a single school district, located in a town of over 120,000 persons. Students were examined through the independent variables of gender, grade level, race, socioeconomic status, and family structure, and the dependent variable of scores taken from the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children. A total of 18 comparisons were made among these variables. Of these 18, 5 were for main effects and 13 were for interactions. Of the five main effects, two were statistically significant: grade level for the dependent variable, self-esteem; and family structure for the dependent variable, self-esteem. Results supported the following generalizations: (1) students living with both biological parents have greater self-esteem than those living in other family structures; (2) grade level and socioeconomic status should be interpreted concurrently; (3) there is no association between gender and self-esteem; and (4) no correlation exists between race and self-esteem. It is suggested that this study be replicated at other grade levels and at different schools, using dissimilar instruments. Contains 57 references. Appendices present various correspondence from the study, a demographic data sheet, the survey instrument, and testing instructions. (RJM)

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ED 397 347

SELF-ESTEEM OF ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN

being

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays State University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science

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Graduate Committee Approval

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"I believe that children are our future, teach them well and let them lead the way. Show them all the beauty they possess inside. Give them a sense of pride to make it easier. . . . . ." (Whitney Houston). This thesis is being dedicated to my greatest love of all -- children. They (the children I have taught throughout my teaching career) are the inspiration behind these pages. May I continue to instill in them their value and worth as individuals.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction.	1
Definition of Self-Esteem	1
Gender and Self-Esteem.	4
Grade Level and Self-Esteem	5
Race and Self-Esteem.	7
Socioeconomic Status and Self-Esteem.	9
Family Structure and Self-Esteem.	11
Summary	13
Statement of the Problem.	13
Rationale and Importance of the Research.	13
Composite Null Hypotheses	14
Independent Variables and Rationale	15
Definition of Variables	15
Independent Variables	15
Dependent Variables	16
Limitations of the Study.	17
Methodology	17
Setting	17
Subjects.	17
Instruments	18
Design.	20

Table of Contents (continued)

	Page
Data Collection Procedures.	22
Research Procedures	23
Data Analysis	23
Results	24
Discussion.	37
Summary	37
Related Literature and Results of the Present Study	38
Generalizations	40
Recommendations	41
References.	42

List of Appendixes

		Page
Appendix A:	Note of Permission From School District.	50
Appendix B:	Confirmation Letter to Participating Schools	52
Appendix C:	Demographic Data Sheet.	54
Appendix D:	Personal Attribute Inventory for Children.	56
Appendix E:	Sample Letter--Dr. Thomas Parish.	58
Appendix F:	Testing Instructions.	60

List of Tables

Page

Table 1: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Chldren Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Gender, Grade Level, and Race Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)..... 26

Table 2: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Gender, Race, and Socioeconomic Status Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)..... 28

Table 3: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Gender, Grade Level, and Socioeconomic Status Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)..... 30

(continued)

List of Tables (continued)

Page

Table 4: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Grade Level, Race, and Socioeconomic Status Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)..... 34

Table 5: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Family Structure Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)..... 36

List of Figures

Page

Figure 1: The Interaction Between Grade Level and Socioeconomic Status. 32

Abstract

The purpose of the researcher was to investigate factors associated with the self-esteem of fourth and seventh graders. The sample consisted of 460 students. The independent variables were gender, grade level, race, socioeconomic status, and family structure. The dependent variable was scores from the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children. The researcher tested 5 composite null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance. Each composite null hypothesis was tested with the three-way analysis of variance (general linear model).

A total of 18 comparisons were made plus 17 recurring. Of the 18 comparisons 5 were for main effects and 13 were for interactions. Of the 5 main effects 2 were statistically significant at the .05 level. The following main effects were statistically significant:

1. grade level for the dependent variable self-esteem, and

2. family structure for the dependent variable self-esteem.

Of the 13 interactions 1 was statistically significant at the .05 level. The statistically significant interaction was for the independent variables grade level and socioeconomic status and the dependent variable self-esteem.

The results of the present study appeared to support the following generalizations:

1. students living with both biological parents have greater self-esteem than those living in other family structure,

2. grade level and socioeconomic status should be interpreted concurrently,

3. no association between gender and self-esteem, and

4. no association between race and self-esteem.

Introduction

Definition of Self-Esteem

According to Locke (1989) and Porter & Washington (1979) there are many challenges in today's world, but the most important one is to ensure that all children grow up feeling competent about themselves. To ensure this, parents, educators, and anyone affecting children may instill in them the value of oneself. According to most writers children need to develop a positive perception of themselves (Youngs, 1993, Adler, 1992). Nourishing a child's positive perception is a life-long goal (Youngs, 1993).

Self-esteem is important in all ages, but research has demonstrated that self-esteem starts developing even before children begin school (Hyatt, 1991). Roe (1962) reported that childrens' parents help them keep four objectives in mind as they grow-up. She stated the following:

- Help him develop a pleasing personality so that others will like him.
- Encourage and help him achieve goals that he feels are important.
- Build up his self-esteem and personal status so that he does not have to envy others.
- Teach him self-control so that he does not do things which make him feel guilty. (p. 333)

Although the article was written 33 years ago, the

material contained in it is very similar to present articles written concerning self-esteem. Helping students develop positive feelings about themselves has long been one of educators fundamental life-long goals (Washington, 1991).

Self-esteem in the United States and other countries has been defined, discussed and researched for many years. "Self-esteem is based on self-concept; self-concept can be characterized by the statement "how I see myself," whereas, self-esteem is "how I feel about how I see myself" (Kohr, Colidron, Skiffington, Masters, & Blust, 1988, p. 11, cited by Raymore, Godbey, and Crawford, 1994). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), the term self-esteem was first used in 1657 by Baker's Sancta Sophia. Self-esteem has been defined using a variety of terms. Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged defines it as, "a confidence and satisfaction in oneself; self respect" (p. 2060). The California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility (Vasconcellos, cited by Jones, 1990) defined this concept as "appreciating my own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others" (p. 19). Child psychologist Greenspan (cited by Adler, 1992) defined self-esteem as "the innermost sense of self-worth and value" (p. 48). Briggs (cited by Gordon, 1991) defined self-esteem as a "great sense of self-respect, a feeling of self-worth" (p. 6).

Abraham Maslow (cited by Hyatt, 1991) considered self-esteem a "core psychological need for humans -- not a want, but a necessity, like food and oxygen" (p. 87). Although these definitions contain a variety of different words, they basically have the same meaning. These definitions are descriptions (opinions) just like self-esteem is an opinion of ones self (Tashakkori, 1993). Brody (1991) indicated the following:

> The opinion a child holds about ones self is the backbone of a child's future. It breeds confidence, competence, a willingness to take chances, an ability to stick up for oneself, a healthy respect for others and a sense of responsibility. (p. 15)

Self-esteem is a core part of people, and they experience (endure) it throughout life. Comer (1991) stated the following:

> The feelings one has about oneself begins in infancy. The quality of care a child receives influences his sense of well-being. Children who receive excessive negative messages through infancy and early childhood need to be taught how to appreciate themselves. They also need to be taught how to perform in ways that result in positive feedback. (p. 200)

According to Raymore, Godbey, & Crawford, (1994), self-esteem is effected by two items: The world that is perceived and the world that exists.

Gender and Self-Esteem

Gray-Little and Applebaum (1979) in their study of children in grades five and eight found that self-esteem was not related to gender. Wylie's (1979, cited by Madhere, 1991) review of the literature in relation to gender reports that of the many studies using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, virtually all showed no difference between boys' and girls' self-esteem. Maccoby & Jacklin (1974, cited by Martinez and Dukes, 1991) concluded that there were not any consistent gender differences in self-esteem after reviewing over 30 comparative studies.

In contrast, other researchers found gender to be associated with self-esteem. York (1994) when using the Personal Attribute Inventory found a difference between males and females. The results indicated girls had a statistically larger mean self-esteem than boys. Richman, Clark, & Brown (1985), using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, found that females were significantly lower in global self-esteem than were males. The scale was constructed for use with high school students, but is now used with adults and children. Alpert-Gillis and Connell (1989) did a study in which the results indicated upper elementary school children's (8 & 12 yrs. old) general self-esteem was

marginally related to biological gender, with boys showing a slight advantage. The results were significantly related to masculinity and androgyny. The results of Hall & Halberstadt (1980) agreed with Alpert-Gillis & Connell. Hall and Halberstadt reported that both masculinity and androgyny predicted higher levels of self-esteem in third to sixth grade children.

Sex-role personality characteristics in children have been found to significantly predict self-esteem, although biological gender, per se, does not appear to predict level of self-esteem in children. Bem (1977) argued that people should show higher levels of self-esteem if they combined both positive masculine and feminine traits. This would result in healthier functioning overall.

Another view was expressed by Erikson (1950, Kohlberg, 1966, and Mussen, 1969, all cited by Albert-Gillis and Connell, 1989). The three agreed that establishing a sex-typed identity was a major adaptive milestone of childhood and adolescence. Researchers might come to a conclusion from the results of the study that feminine girls and masculine boys should have higher self-esteem than other gender and sex-role combinations.

Grade Level and Self-Esteem

Lewis (cited by Brody, 1991) stated "the foundation of self-esteem is laid soon after birth" (p. 26). As infants become toddlers and preschoolers, parents and others must

not measure them against other children. Gottlieb, (cited by Brody, 1991). The temptation is there but they must remember "Not every child has the same timetable for development, and they all don't react the same way" (p. 26).

Harter (1982) developed an instrument (The Perceived Competence Scale for Children) to assess children's self-perceptions. He hypothesized that children aged eight or older had a distinct view of their general self-worth. As children matured, various facets of self-esteem became more distinct.

York (1994) indicated in her results that children in grades 5 and 6 had statistically lower mean self-esteem scores than children in grade 4. Pallas, Entwisle, Alexander and Weinstein (1990) reported that even as late as the fourth grade, many of the dimensions of self-esteem were highly interrelated, so children who saw themselves as competent in one domain were likely to see themselves as competent in other domains as well. Towards the end of the fourth grade the positive image girls had about themselves may begin to decline. The reason was due to this age group approaching or entering puberty (Harter, 1982). The boys' positive image did not decline at that exact time since boys experience such changes at a later time. Rosenberg (1986, cited by Whaley, 1993) noted that there was a decline in children's self-esteem between the ages of 10 and 12.

Harter & Pike (1984) reported that middle-school boys rated their physical appearance more highly than similarly aged girls. Hirsch and DuBois (1991) reported that one of the clusters of students, in the study, upon entering middle school, had a steady and severe decline in self-esteem. It was hypothesized that their low self-esteem did not emerge suddenly. Contradicting the first cluster, the results of the study indicated that another cluster of students with the largest number of adolescents had consistently high self-esteem. This group was unshaken upon entering junior high.

Hirsch & DuBois (1991) concluded that increased levels of school adjustment and peer social support would be associated with more positive self-esteem. Peer social support has been related to psychological well-being among adolescents in several studies (Cauce, 1986; Hirsch and Reischl, 1985). The highness or lowness of self-esteem in adolescents may not come from the move to junior high. Suffering from an unexpected decline in school performance, stressful family experiences, or other unknown factors may also lead to a decline (Hirsch & DuBois, 1991; Raymore, Godbey & Crawford, 1994; Conger, Elder, Huck, Lorenz, Simons & Whitbeck; 1991, and Small, 1988).

Race & Self-Esteem

Race as a factor in self-esteem has been widely explored, not without bias, with the expectation that

minorities' self-concept would be lower (Kohr, Coldiron, Skiffington, Masters, & Blust, 1988). Some research results do support the statement that members of minority groups have lower self-esteem than members of the dominant group (Heiss & Owens, 1972; Martinez & Dukes, 1987; Peterson & Ramirez, 1971; and Thomas & Hughes, 1986). However, results have been contradictory in other studies.

There has been a wide variety of research conducted on race and self-esteem. The majority of it has compared the self-esteem of African-American and white youth. A study by Rosenberg and his colleagues concludes that African-Americans have levels of self-esteem that are at least as high as those of whites (M. Rosenberg 1979, M. Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971, all cited by Martinez and Dukes, 1991). Rosenberg and Simmons (1972, and Powell and Fuller, 1973, all cited by Simmons, Brown, Bush, and Blyth, 1978) found in their research that there were no self-esteem disadvantages for African-American children. Hare (1981, cited by Whaley, 1993, and Leung and Drasgow, 1986) agreed as they found no evidence to support the statement that African American children had lower self-esteem than White children.

In contrast, some researchers reported other results. Greater self-esteem scores of African-American adolescents, compared with those of whites, have been found in numerous studies (Tashakkori & Thompson, 1991; Wade, Thompson, Tashakkori, & Valente, 1989). In two studies by Martinez &

Dukes (1987, 1991), African-American adolescents' self-esteem scores were higher than for white adolescents. Research results also indicated that the self-esteem of Black students increased throughout the school years from equal to higher levels than Whites (Powell and Fuller, 1973, cited by Simmons, Brown, Bush, and Blyth, 1978).

Leung & Drasgow (1986) found in their study that African-American & white youths did not show a difference on their level of self-esteem, but both groups were higher than their Hispanic counterparts. The same results were found in similar studies (Stephan & Rosenfeld 1978, Grossman, Wirt, & Davids, 1985). In contrast with the above results, other researchers found no differences among the self-esteem of African-American, White & Hispanic children (Larned & Muller, 1979, Franco, 1983). Research on children also indicated that Asian American children have lower self-esteem than do whites, African-Americans, and/or Hispanics (Chang, 1975).

Socioeconomic Status and Self-Esteem

Pallas, Entwisle, Alexander, & Weinsten (1990) researched the social structure and self-esteem of children. First through fourth grade students were studied. The evidence showed that poorer and more advantaged children both shared similar views of themselves. In a few instances the economically advantaged children held more positive self-concepts than the poorer children. As children became

older, the view of themselves became more distinct. The results indicated minimal differences in self-esteem scores. Therefore, these researchers concluded that there was no significant difference in the self-esteem of economically advantaged and poorer children. The results of a study conducted by Glovinsky-Fahsholtz (1992) supported the results by Pallas, Entwisle, Alexander, & Weinstein (1990).

Glovinsky-Fahsholtz (1992) conducted a study using 52 middle school students who received free or reduced-price meals. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept scale was used. The mean self-esteem scores were higher for the students not eligible for free or reduced meals. Even though the scores were higher, the differences were very minimal (not statistically significant). The researchers concluded that there was not a significant impact on the self-esteem of students receiving free or reduced lunches.

Research conducted by Kohr, Coldiron, Skiffington, Masters, & Blust (1988) produced contradictory results. The research results indicated that fifth grade children's self-esteem scores increased as the Socioeconomic Status (SES) level increased. The results were consistent whether or not the students attended low or high SES schools. The same results were found in the eighth grade students that were tested. Evidence by Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978) demonstrated that family economic circumstances were associated with the self-esteem of children. Similar

findings were reported by (Kohr et al., 1988, Richman, Clark, & Brown, 1985). They concluded that the lower an individual's socioeconomic status, the more likely he or she is to have low self-esteem.

A study was conducted on family economic hardship and self-esteem (Conger, Elder, Jr., Huck, Lorenz, Simons, & Whitbeck, 1991). The study included early adolescents and their parents. The researchers concluded that the preoccupation of parents when dealing with economic problems was reflected in their relationships with their children and subsequently in their children's evaluation of themselves. If parental warmth and support diminished due to economic hard times, this was a crucial factor in the negative self-esteem of early adolesence.

Family Structure & Self-Esteem

There has been dramatic change in family structure over the past 100 years. When family was mentioned (Raschke & Raschke, 1979), people thought it consisted of a mother, father, and children, but family structure is changing in today's world. Divorce, separation, loss of family member(s) and other factors contribute to different family structures.

In comparing intact and divorced families, Parish and Wigle (1985) found that children who were living in intact families (families with both biological parents) consistently evaluated themselves and their parents more

positively than children who had experienced parental divorce. Parish (1991) conducted another study dealing with family structure. In this study, Parish examined a total of 648 youths ranging from 10-18 years of age. They were selected from across the state of Kansas. Each youth completed the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children's Instrument (PAIC). Comparisons were made in regard to whether the youths were from intact families or divorced, remarried families. In this study, self-concept for females was higher than for those from intact families. Those from divorced, nonremarried and divorced remarried families were very similar to each other. In contrast, the interaction for the male youths appeared highest among those from divorced, nonremarried families and lowest from divorced, remarried families.

A further study of self-esteem of seventh and eighth grade students (in rural Nebraska) was conducted (Hall and Rowe, 1991). A total of 108 students participated in the study. Self-esteem was measured using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. One of the factors analyzed was family type. Family type included two-parent, single-parent, and step-parent. The results concerning self-esteem were significantly higher when comparing teens from two-parent families with step-parent families. The scores were not significantly different between adolescents' self-esteem in step-parent and single-parent families, nor between

adolescents in two-parent and single-parent families.

Summary

There has been a wide variety of research projects conducted to examine the self-esteem of children. Many factors were investigated. Some researchers examined self-esteem as it relates to family structure and socioeconomic status. Other studies related self-esteem to age and grade level. Additional studies associated self-esteem and self-concept to gender and race. All the researchers agreed that self-esteem was an integral part of a person's life.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the researcher was to investigate the self-esteem of fourth and seventh graders.

Rationale and Importance of the Research

School counselors have contact with children every day, and encounter several problems associated with self-esteem. Therefore, it is important to examine this issue and the factors associated with it.

This research was important because it helped to generate additional information pertaining to the relationship of gender, grade level, race, family structure, and socioeconomic status of self-esteem among fourth and seventh graders.

In addition, the research was important because it provided information for those directly or indirectly associated with children. For example, teachers,

principals, counselors, day care providers, and most of all, parents, may utilize these findings in their efforts, in support of children and youth.

The results from the present study provided information pertaining to the following questions:

1. Is there an association between gender and self-esteem?

2. Is there an association between grade level and self-esteem?

3. Is there an association between race and self-esteem?

4. Is there an association between socioeconomic status and self-esteem?

5. Is there an association between family structure and self-esteem?

Composite Null Hypotheses

All null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

(1) The differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth & seventh grade students according to gender, grade level, and race will not be statistically significant.

(2) The differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth & seventh grade students according to gender, race, and socioeconomic status will not be statistically significant.

(3) The differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth & seventh grade students according to gender, grade level, and socioeconomic status will not be statistically significant.

(4) The differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth & seventh grade students according to grade level, race, and socioeconomic status will not be statistically significant.

(5) The differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth & seventh grade students according to race, socioeconomic status, and family structure will not be statistically significant.

Independent Variables & Rationale

The following independent variables were investigated: gender, grade level, race, socioeconomic status, and family structure. These independent variables were investigated for the following reasons:

1. lack of information found pertaining to these variables,
2. information found was not current, and
3. results found in the literature were inconclusive.

Definition of Variables

Independent Variables

All independent variables, except socioeconomic status were self-reported. Information pertaining to socioeconomic status was obtained directly from the schools by the

researcher. The following independent variables were investigated:

1. gender - two levels,
   level one, male, and
   level two, female;
2. grade - two levels,
   level one, 4th grade, and
   level two, 7th grade;
3. race - five levels,
   level one, biracial,
   level two, black,
   level three, white,
   level four, hispanic, and
   level five, other;
4. socioeconomic status - three levels,
   level one, full priced lunch,
   level two, reduced lunch,
   level three, free lunch; and
5. family structure - four levels,
   level one, biological mother & father,
   level two, mother,
   level three, mother & stepfather, and
   level four, other.

Dependent Variable

Scores from the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children were employed as the dependent variable.

Limitations of the Study

The following might have affected the results of the study:

1. the sample was not randomly selected, (certain schools were chosen based on their diverse student populations),

2. the sample came from 5 schools in Northeastern Kansas (two of the schools were middle schools and three were elementary schools), and

3. most information was self-reported.

Methodology

Setting

The setting for this study was a large unified school district in Northeastern Kansas. The schools studied were in a town with over 120,000 people. Students were chosen from 5 schools. Two of the 5 schools were middle schools, and the other 3 were elementary schools. The schools were in different geographical locations and supported a large range of economic households.

Subjects

The subjects were selected from elementary and middle schools in Northeastern Kansas, and were fourth and seventh grade students. An availability sampling procedure was used. An application was filled out requesting permission to conduct the survey in the school district. The research committee for the district approved the request (Appendix

A). Arrangements were made by phone with the principal, vice-principal, and/or counselors of the participating schools. A confirmation letter was sent to each contact person at their school (Appendix B). Every student present on the day the survey was given in both grade levels had an opportunity to participate. All students who were present participated. A total of 155 fourth grade students were surveyed, with all 155 completing the instruments. A total of 307 seventh graders were surveyed with 305 completing the instruments. A grand total of 462 instruments were administered with 460 being completed. The following subjects came from each of the 5 schools: School A, 55 given, 55 completed; School B, 23 given, 23 completed; School C, 77 given, 77 completed; School D, 146 given, 145 completed; School E, 161 given, 160 completed. The sample contained the following: 23 Biracial students, 100 Black students, 269 White students, 36 Hispanic students, and 32 Other students. The total sample consisted of the following: 87 fourth grade males, 68 fourth grade females, 157 seventh grade males, and 148 seventh grade females.

Instruments

Two instruments were administered to collect data for analysis. The instruments were the Demographic Data Sheet and the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children (PAIC) Self-esteem measurement.

The Demographic Data Sheet was developed by the present researcher. It addressed the following: gender, grade level, race, and family structure (Appendix C).

The PAIC was developed in 1978 by Dr. Thomas Parish, professor at Kansas State University (Appendix D). Permission was granted by Dr. Parish to administer this study (Appendix E). This Inventory has a total of 48 words listed in alphabetical order. The 48 words contain 24 positive descriptors and 24 negative descriptors. The students were asked to select 15 words which best describe how they felt about themselves. Scoring of the instrument consisted of counting the number of positive adjectives checked. In a study of 75 elementary school children (47 third grade children and 28 sixth grade children), Parish and Taylor (1978b) found the following:

> The validity coefficients reported in this study indicated that the PAIC was significantly correlated with the concurrent criterion variable PHCSCS [Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale]. In fact, the correlation of .67 between the two scales--reported across grade levels--was about as high as any concurrent validity correlations noted between the PHCSCS and other self-concept scales described in the test manual. (p. 568)

Parish and Taylor (1978a), in a study of 390 elementary school students from grades three through eight found these results. "The test-retest correlation coefficient for the PAIC over a four week interval was .88" (p. 1225).

Design

A status survey factorial design was employed. The independent variables were: gender, grade level, race, socioeconomic status, and family structure. The dependent variable was the self-esteem scores on the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children.

The following designs were used with composite null hypotheses numbered 1 through 5:

Composite null hypothesis number 1, a 2 X 2 X 5 factorial design,

Composite null hypothesis number 2, a 2 X 5 X 3 factorial design,

Composite null hypothesis number 3, a 2 X 2 X 3 factorial design,

Composite null hypothesis number 4, a 2 X 5 X 3 factorial design, and

Composite null hypothesis number 5, a 5 X 3 X 4 factorial design.

McMillan and Schumacher (1989) addressed 10 threats to internal and external validity. The researcher dealt with the threats to internal validity in the following manner.

1. history -- did not pertain because information was collected only one time,

2. selection -- all students present on the day the data were collected were asked to complete the instruments,

3. statistical regression -- did not pertain because information was collected only one time,

4. testing -- did not pertain because information was collected only one time,

5. instrumentation -- did not pertain because information was collected only one time,

6. mortality -- did not pertain because information was collected only one time,

7. maturation -- did not pertain because information was collected only one time,

8. diffusion of treatment -- did not pertain because information was collected only one time,

9. experimenter bias -- the same oral instructions (Appendix F) were given by the researcher to all groups during the instrumentation, and

10. statistical conclusion -- two mathematical assumptions were violated (random sampling and equal number of subjects in cells). The lack of equal number in cells was corrected by using the general linear model, and the researcher did not project beyond the statistical procedures employed.

The researcher dealt with the two general categories of threats to external validity (McMillan and Schumacher, 1989) in the following manner:

1. population external validity -- the sample was not random; therefore, the results from the present study should be generalized only to similar groups; and

2. ecological external validity -- instruments were administered according to standard accepted procedure.

Data Collection Procedures

The research committee of the unified school district granted approval for this researcher to conduct the study (Appendix A). The researcher then contacted the principals of the elementary and middle schools to make sure they approved the information the researcher was seeking. The principal, vice-principal, and/or counselor of each school was contacted by the researcher, by telephone, to set up the testing dates and times that worked best for both parties involved. A letter was sent to each school to confirm testing dates and times (Appendix B). On each testing day, the researcher administered the 2 instruments to students at all 5 of the schools. The 2 instruments administered were the Demographic Data Sheet and the PAIC. The size of the classes varied from 23-60 students. The students were asked to put names on both forms according to the planned survey procedure (Appendix F). The names were crucial for determining the independent variable socioeconomic status

(SES). SES was acquired by records at each individual school. As each student completed the instruments they were examined for completeness. The researcher scored and coded the completed instruments. The data were analyzed by the Fort Hays State University Computing Center.

Research Procedures

The following steps were implemented:

1. a research topic was selected,
2. the literature surveyed included ERIC, PsychLit, and Sociology Index at Forsyth Library, Fort Hays State University and ERIC, Psychology Abstracts, Infotrac and Sociological Abstracts at Mabee Library, Washburn University,
3. instruments were selected,
4. permission to use PAIC instrument was obtained,
5. permission was obtained from the school district,
6. permission was obtained from each school,
7. data were collected and tallied,
8. a research proposal was developed, and defended before a thesis committee,
9. data were analyzed by computing center,
10. thesis was defended before a thesis committee, and
11. final editing of the thesis.

Data Analysis

The following were compiled:

1. appropriate descriptive statistics,

2. three-way analysis of variance (general linear model),

3. Bonferroni (Dunn) t test for means, and

4. Duncan's multiple range test for means.

Results

The purpose of the researcher was to investigate factors associated with the self-esteem of fourth and seventh graders. The sample consisted of 460 students. The independent variables were gender, grade level, race, socioeconomic status, and family structure. The dependent variable was scores from the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children. The researcher tested 5 composite null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance. Each composite null hypothesis was tested with the three-way analysis of variance (general linear model). The following designs were used with composite null hypotheses numbered 1 through 5:

Composite null hypothesis number 1, 2 x 2 x 5 factorial design;

Composite null hypothesis number 2, 2 x 5 x 3 factorial design;

Composite null hypothesis number 3, 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design;

Composite null hypothesis number 4, 2 x 5 x 3 factorial design; and

Composite null hypothesis number 5, 5 x 3 x 4 factorial design.

The results section was organized according to composite null hypotheses for ease of reference. Information pertaining to each composite null hypothesis was presented in a common format for ease of comparison.

It was hypothesized in composite null hypothesis number 1 that the differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth and seventh grade students according to gender, grade placement, and race would not be statistically significant. Information pertaining to composite null hypothesis number 1 was presented in Table 1. The following were cited in Table 1: variables, group sizes, means, standard deviations, *F* values, and *p* levels.

Table 1: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Gender, Grade Level, and Race Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)

Variable	n	M*	S	F value	p level
Gender (A)					
Male	244	11.6	3.48	1.29	.2564
Female	216	12.5	2.98		
Grade Level (B)					
Fourth	155	13.2[a]	2.61	11.25	.0009
Seventh	305	11.4[b]	3.42		
Race (C)					
Biracial	23	11.4	3.30		
Black	100	12.4	2.85		
White	269	11.8	3.58	0.79	.2595
Hispanic	36	12.7	2.47		
Other	32	12.0	2.51		
Interactions					
A X B				1.02	.3129
A X C				0.25	.9089
B X C				0.62	.6506
A X B X C				0.28	.8882

*The larger the value, the greater the self-esteem.
[a]Difference statistically significant at the .05 level according to Bonferroni (Dunn) t test for means.

One of the 7 *p* values was statistically significant at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The statistically significant comparison was for the main effect grade level. The results cited in Table 1 indicated fourth graders had a statistically greater self-esteem than seventh graders.

It was hypothesized in composite null hypothesis number 2 that the differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children scores for fourth and seventh grade students according to gender, race, and socioeconomic status would not be statistically significant. Information pertaining to composite null hypothesis number 2 was presented in Table 2. The following were cited in Table 2: variables, group sizes, means, standard deviations, *F* values, and *p* levels.

Table 2: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Gender, Race, and Socioeconomic Status Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)

Variable	n	M*	S	F value	p level
Gender (A)					
Male	244	11.6	3.48	0.61	.4351
Female	216	12.5	2.98		
Race (C)					
Biracial	23	11.4	3.30		
Black	100	12.4	2.85	0.11	.9797
White	269	11.8	3.58		
Hispanic	36	12.7	2.47		
Other	32	12.0	2.51		
Socioeconomic Status (D)					
Full Priced Lunch	247	11.7	3.52		
Reduced Priced Lunch	25	12.3	2.99	1.33	.2661
Free Lunch	188	12.4	2.94		
	Interactions				
	A X C			0.43	.7849
	A X D			0.82	.4393
	C X D			0.34	.9513
	A X C X D			0.52	.7631

*The larger the value, the greater the self-esteem.

None of the 7 *p* values were statistically significant at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypotheses were retained. The results cited in Table 2 indicated no significant associations between independent variables and the dependent variable.

It was hypothesized in composite null hypothesis number 3 that the differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth and seventh grade students according to gender, grade level, and socioeconomic status would not be statistically significant. Information pertaining to composite null hypothesis number 3 was presented in Table 3. The following were cited in Table 3: variables, group sizes, means, standard deviations, *F* values, and *p* levels.

Table 3: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Gender, Grade Level, and Socioeconomic Status Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)

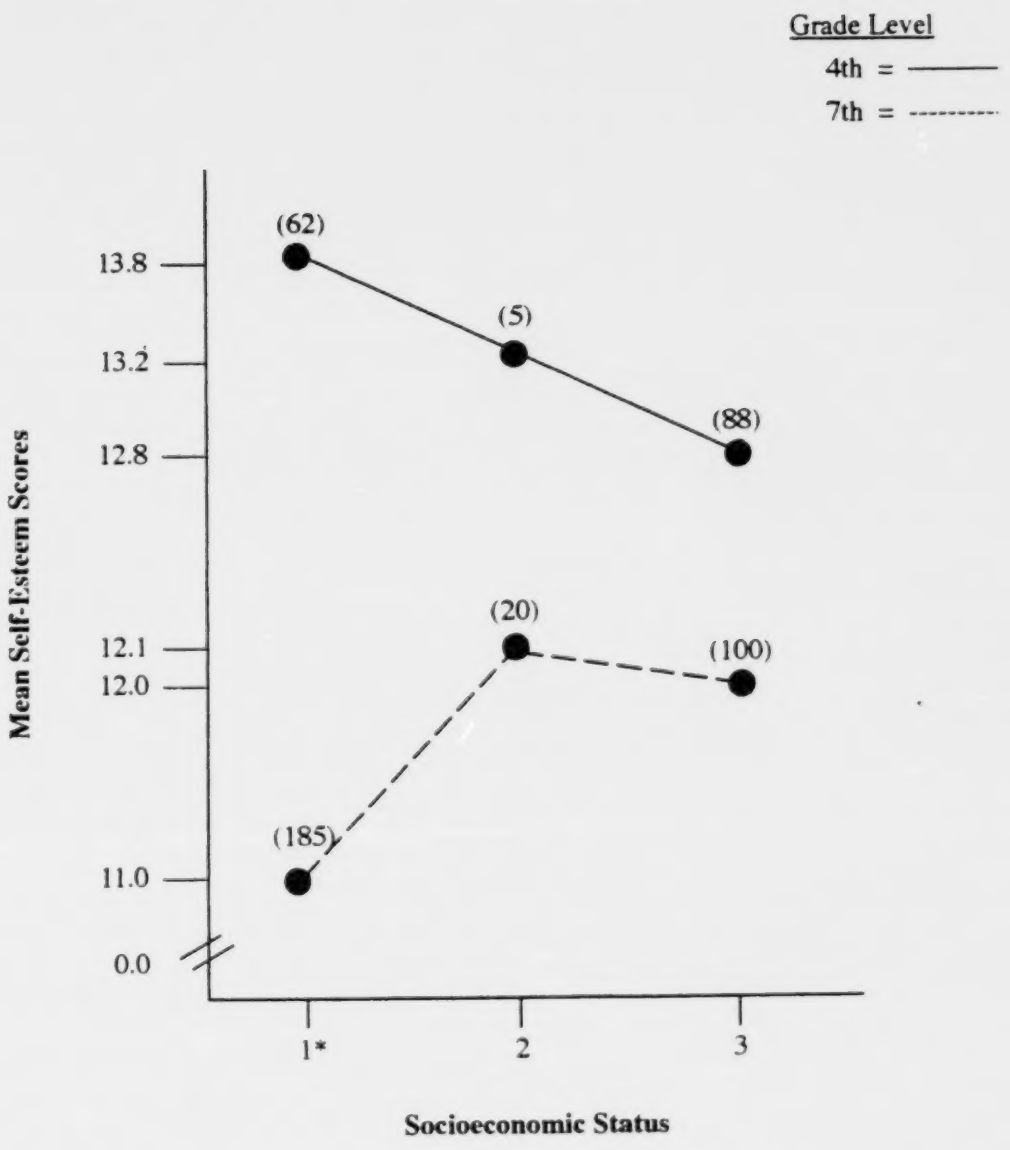
Variable	n	M*	S	F value	p level
Gender (A)					
Male	244	11.6	3.48	0.25	.6154
Female	216	12.5	2.98		
Grade Level (B)					
Fourth	155	13.2[a]	2.61	6.56	.0108
Seventh	305	11.4[b]	3.42		
Socioeconomic Status (D)					
Full Priced Lunch	247	11.7	3.52		
Reduced Priced Lunch	25	12.3	2.99	0.01	.0988
Free Lunch	188	12.4	2.94		
	Interactions				
	A X B			1.79	.1813
	A X D			0.48	.6221
	B X D			4.56	.0109
	A X B X D			0.17	.8427

*The larger the value, the greater the self-esteem.
[a][b]Difference statistically significant at the .05 level according to Bonferroni (Dunn) t test for means.

Two of the p values were statistically significant at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected. One of the statistically significant comparisons was for the main effect grade level (recurring, Table 1). The second statisticlaly significant comparison was for the interaction between the independent variables grade level and socioeconomic status and the dependent variable self-esteem.

The interaction between the independent variables grade level and socioeconomic status was depicted in a profile plot. Figure 1 contains mean self-esteem scores and curves for grade level.

Figure 1: The Interaction Between Grade Level and Socioeconomic Status.



*1 = full priced lunch,
2 = reduced priced lunch, and
3 = free lunch

The interaction between the independent variable grade level and socioeconomic status was ordinal. The results cited in Figure 1 indicated the following:

1. students in fourth grade who paid full price for their lunch had numerically the highest self-esteem of any sub group, and

2. students in seventh grade who paid full price for their lunch had numerically the lowest mean self-esteem score of any sub group.

It was hypothesized in composite null hypothesis number 4 that the differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth and seventh grade students according to grade level, race, and socioeconomic status would not be statistically significant. Information pertaining to composite null hypothesis number 4 was presented in Table 4. The following were cited in Table 4: variables, group sizes, means, standard deviations, *F* values, and *p* levels.

Table 4: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Grade Level, Race, and Socioeconomic Status Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)

Variable	n	M*	S	F value	p level
Grade Level (B)					
Fourth	155	13.2[a]	3.48	7.94	.0051
Seventh	306	11.4[b]	2.98		
Race (C)					
Biracial	23	11.4	3.30		
Black	100	12.4	2.85		
White	269	11.8	3.58	0.29	.8848
Hispanic	36	12.7	2.47		
Other	32	12.0	2.51		
Socioeconomic Status (D)					
Full Priced Lunch	247	11.7	3.52		
Reduced Priced Lunch	25	12.3	2.99	0.16	.8543
Free Lunch	188	12.4	2.94		
Interactions					
B X C				0.11	.9797
B X D				1.32	.2680
C X D				0.27	.9755
B X C X D				0.19	.9531

*The larger the value, the greater the self-esteem.
[a][b]Difference statistically significant at the .05 level according to Bonferroni (Dunn) t test for means.

One of the 7 *p* values was statistically significant at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The statistically significant comparison was for the main effect grade level (recurring, Table 1). The results cited in Table 4 indicated no additional associations between independent variables and the dependent variable.

It was hypothesized in composite null hypothesis number 5 that the differences among the mean Personal Attribute Inventory scores for fourth and seventh grade students according to race, socioeconomic status, and family structure would not be statistically significant. Information pertaining to composite null hypothesis number 5 was presented in Table 5: variables, group sizes, means, standard deviations, *F* values, and *p* levels.

Table 5: A Comparison of Mean Personal Attribute Inventory for Children Scores of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students According to Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Family Structure Employing a Three-way Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model)

Variable	n	M*	S	F value	p level
Race (C)					
Biracial	23	11.4	3.30		
Black	100	12.4	2.85		
White	269	11.8	3.58	2.31	.0570
Hispanic	36	12.7	2.47		
Other	32	12.0	2.51		
Socioeconomic Status (D)					
Full Priced Lunch	247	11.7	3.52		
Reduced Priced Lunch	25	12.3	2.99	2.27	.1045
Free Lunch	188	12.4	2.94		
Family Structure (E)					
Biological mother & father	212	12.4[d]	2.88		
Mother	122	11.7	3.60	3.49	.0157
Mother & stepfather	78	11.9	3.33		
Other	48	11.3[e]	3.81		
Interactions					
C X D				1.24	.2714
C X E				0.73	.7272
D X E				1.97	.0692
C X D X E				1.41	.1576

*The larger the value, the greater the self-esteem.
[e]Difference statistically significant at the .05 level according to Duncan's multiple range test for means.

One of the 7 p values was statistically significant at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The statistically significant comparison was for the main effect family structure. The results cited in Table 5 indicated that students living with their biological mother and father had a statistically greater self-esteem than students living in other family structure.

Discussion

Summary

The purpose of the researcher was to investigate factors associated with the self-esteem of fourth and seventh graders. The sample consisted of 460 students. The independent variables were gender, grade level, race, socioeconomic status, and family structure. The dependent variable was scores from the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children. The researcher tested 5 composite null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance. Each composite null hypothesis was tested with the three-way analysis of variance (general linear model).

A total of 18 comparisons were made plus 17 recurring. Of the 18 comparisons 5 were for main effects and 13 were for interactions. Of the 5 main effects 2 were statistically significant at the .05 level. The following main effects were statistically significant:

1. grade level for the dependent variable self-esteem, and

2. family structure for the dependent variable self-esteem.

The results indicated the following for main effects:

1. fourth graders had statistically greater self-esteem than seventh graders, and

2. students living with their biological mother and father had a statistically greater self-esteem than students living in other family structure.

Of the 13 interactions 1 was statistically significant at the .05 level. The statistically significant interaction was for the independent variables grade level and socioeconomic status and the dependent variable self-esteem.

Related Literature and Results of the Present Study

The results of the present study supported those of York (1994) who reported in her results that children in grades 5 and 6 had statistically lower mean self-esteem scores than children in grade 4. The present results also supported Rosenberg (1986, cited by Whaley, 1993) who reported that there was a decline in children's self-esteem between the ages of 10 and 12. The results of the present research supported those of Hirsch and DuBois (1991) who reported that one cluster of students, upon entering middle school, had a steady and severe decline in self-esteem. These generalizations were supported by the finding of the present study that the difference in mean self-esteem scores for fourth graders were higher than those in seventh grade.

The results of present study indicated statistical association between family structure and self-esteem. Those results supported the findings of Parish and Wigle (1985) as they found that children who were living in intact families (families with both biological parents) consistently evaluated themselves and their parents more positively than children who had experienced parental divorce. The results of the present study also supported those reported by Hall and Rowe (1991) which indicated self-esteem was significantly higher when comparing teens from two-parent families with step-parent families. These generalizations were supported by the finding of the present researcher that students living with both their biological mother and father had a statistically greater self-esteem than students living in other family structure.

The results of the present study supported those reported by Gray-Little and Applebaum (1979) who reported that self-esteem was not related to gender. The results of the present study also supported Wylie (1979, cited by Madhere, 1991) who reported no significant differences in the self-esteem scores of male and female school children. The results of the present study also supported those reported by Maccoby & Jacklin (1974, cited by Martinez and Dukes, 1991) that there were no consistent gender differences in self-esteem. These generalizations were supported by the finding of the present researcher that

there was no association between gender and self-esteem. The results of the present study did not support those reported by York (1994) who found a difference between males and females. The results by York indicated higher self-esteem for girls than boys. The results of the present research did not support those reported by Richman, Clark, and Brown (1985) who found that females had significantly lower self-esteem than males.

The results of the present study supported those of Leung and Drasgow (1986) which indicated no evidence that African American children have lower self-esteem than White children. The results of the present study supported those of Franco (1983) which indicated no differences among the self-esteem of African-American, White and Hispanic children. These generalizations were supported by the finding of the present researcher that there was no association between race and self-esteem. The results of the present study did not support those of Martinez and Dukes (1987) who reported that members of minority groups have lower self-esteem than members of the dominant group. The results of the present study did not support those of Tashakkori and Thompson (1991) which indicated greater self-esteem scores of African-American adolescents, compared with those of whites.

Generalizations

The results of the present study appeared to support

the following generalizations:

1. students living with both biological parents have greater self-esteem than those living in other family structure,

2. grade level and socioeconomic status should be interpreted concurrently,

3. no association between gender and self-esteem, and

4. no association between race and self-esteem.

Recommendations

Results of the present study appeared to support the following recommendations:

1. the study should be replicated at different grade levels,

2. the study should be replicated using a different instrument,

3. the study should be replicated at different schools, and

4. the study should be replicated in inner-city schools.

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Appendix A

Note of Permission From School District

February 23, 1995

Ms. Sheri Y. Garner
3208 SW Eveningside Drive #30
Topeka, KS 66614

Dear Ms. Garner:

The Research Committee has approved your research study titled, "Self Esteem of 4th and 7th Graders." Dr. Richard Driver, Curriculum and Instructional Specialist has been named your supervisor/liaison during your research. Please contact him at 233-0313, Ext. 345 as the first step in implementing your study.

Sincerely,

Stephan A. Henry, Ph.D.
Research Committee Chairman

cc: Dr. Richard Driver

Appendix B

Confirmation Letter to Participating Schools

April 3, 1995

Dear

Thank you for allowing me to come into your school and administer the survey for my thesis. Enclosed you will find the two forms I will be using with your students. I thought it would be helpful for you and the teachers involved to see them ahead of time. If you have any questions feel free to call me at home (272-4107) if you can't reach me during the day at McClure Elem. (271-3785).

Thanks again and I will see you on _____ at _____.

Sincerely,

Sheri Y. Garner

Sheri Y. Garner

Appendix C

Demographic Data Sheet

Name_____ Code_____

Demographic Data Sheet

Please mark the appropriate information below.
Please make sure all questions are answered.

1. Gender: _____ Male
   _____ Female

2. Grade Level: _____ 4th grade
   _____ 7th grade

3. Indicate Your Race:
   _____ Biracial
   _____ Black
   _____ White
   _____ Hispanic
   _____ Native American
   _____ If other, please explain: _____

4. Family Structure:
   Check the appropriate one.
   I live with:
   _____ biological mother and father
   _____ mother
   _____ father
   _____ mother and stepfather
   _____ father and stepmother
   _____ foster parents
   _____ adoptive parents
   _____ relatives other than parents, please explain: _____
   _____ other, please explain: _____

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Appendix D

Personal Attribute Inventory for Children

Name_____ School_____ Teacher _____

The Personal Attribute Inventory for Children

Please follow along as I read this list of words. Now I would like you to read this list of words silently. Are there any questions about what any of these words mean? Now read back through this list of words carefully. Put an X in the space beside the 15 words which best describe how you feel about yourself. Remember, you can only choose 15. When you are finished please count your X's to be sure there are 15, and no more.

____ Afraid	____ Happy
____ Angry	____ Healthy
____ Awkward	____ Helpful
____ Bad	____ Honest
____ Beautiful	____ Jolly
____ Bitter	____ Kind
____ Brave	____ Lazy
____ Calm	____ Lovely
____ Careless	____ Mean
____ Cheerful	____ Nagging
____ Complaining	____ Nice
____ Cowardly	____ Polite
____ Cruel	____ Pretty
____ Dirty	____ Rude
____ Dumb	____ Selfish
____ Fairminded	____ Show-off
____ Foolish	____ Strong
____ Friendly	____ Sweet
____ Gentle	____ Ugly
____ Gloomy	____ Unfriendly
____ Good	____ Weak
____ Great	____ Wise
____ Greedy	____ Wonderful
____ Handsome	____ Wrongful

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Appendix E

Sample Letter -- Dr. Thomas Parish

July 25, 1994

Dr. Thomas Parish
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506

Dear Dr. Parish:

I am a graduate student at Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas, and am presently in the beginning stage of my thesis paper. I am interested in comparing the self-esteem of black/white children in relation to their socioeconomic status.

I am writing you to request permission to use the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children and to obtain a copy of that inventory. If you agree to allow me to use the inventory, please send a copy to me at the following address:

3208 SW Eveningside Dr. #30
Topeka, KS 66614

Thank you for your help and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sheri Garner

Sheri Garner

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Appendix F

Testing Instructions

INSTRUCTIONS

My name is Sheri Garner. I am a 2nd grade teacher at McClure Elementary. I am currently working toward a Master's Degree at Fort Hays State University. In order to complete the degree I have to write a thesis. A thesis is a type of research paper. In order to be able to do my study as accurate as possible I will need your help in completing 2 forms. One is a Demographic Data Sheet and the other one is a Personal Attribute Inventory. I will go over the instructions with you before you complete either of the forms. Please wait until all instructions are read and questions answered before you begin. I will tell you when to start. It is very important that you are very honest on these two forms and record your true feelings. It is also very important that you concentrate on your own forms only and no one else's. You will be allowed to ask questions after you begin, but only to the adults in this room, not a classmate. You must raise your hand and wait until we come to you. You will have as much time as needed to complete these forms. I estimate that you will be finished in about 20 minutes. Participating in this survey will not affect your grade in this class or in any other classes in any way. No one, except me, will know your individual responses to this survey. When the information I need from the forms is completed, I will cut off your name and dispose of it. You do not have to participate in this study, but I would

appreciate your help. I would like to thank each and every one of you for helping me with this study.

Demographic Data Sheet Instructions:

Please mark the appropriate information below.

Please make sure all questions are answered.

Personal Attribute Inventory Instructions:

Please follow along as I read this list of words. Now I would like you to read this list of words silently. Are there any questions about what any of these words mean? Now read back through this list of words carefully. Put an X in the space beside the 15 words which best describe how you feel about yourself. Remember, you can only choose 15. When you are finished please count your X's to be sure there are 15, and no more.

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